

Missouri State Technical Committee Meeting
USDA Training Room – Suite 232
Columbia, Mo
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m.
September 11, 2008

Opening Comments – Roger Hansen, Missouri State Conservationist

Roger provided a brief overview of the new Farm Bill (Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008). Preliminary information has been prepared for the 2009 program sign-ups; it will be finalized after the rule making process is completed.

FSA Update

Tim Kelley, FSA State Executive Director, gave an overview of the anticipated changes for FSA programs in the Farm Bill. There are several new programs in the Farm Bill, but not a lot of big changes. Currently, there are no plans for a 2009 general Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) sign-up or for early outs in 2009. FSA is working on revised soil rental rates for CRP; expecting a 20% to 30% increase. The average around the state is expected to be \$75.00 per acre.

NRCS FY 2008 Programs Update

NRCS FY08 programs update was given by NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Dwaine Gelnar. The handout “NRCS Missouri Farm Bill Program Summary Fiscal Year 2008” was reviewed. For EQIP and WHIP, Missouri NRCS obligated more funds than in the past. The CSP sign-up smaller than anticipated, but Missouri continues to obligate \$30,000,000 per year to CSP participants through existing contracts.

Update on 2008 Farm Bill

A Farm Bill update was given by Dwaine Gelnar. He reviewed the handout “Food Conservation and Energy Act of 2008” highlighting:

- Subtitle D-Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) which will be available nationwide, not just in selected watersheds as the Conservation Security Program was in the past. It will be a competitive process within each state.
- Section 2403-Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) was re-authorized.
- Subtitle F- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
 - The overall payment limitation will be reduced in the new Farm Bill to \$300,000 from \$450,000 in the current Farm Bill.
 - Payments are allowed for socially disadvantaged farmers in addition to limited resource or beginning farmers or ranchers.
 - Continues the designation that 60 percent of EQIP funding must be targeted to practices that benefit livestock producers.
 - Authorizes payments for conservation practices that address air quality concerns

A suggestion was made to use EQIP funds to maintain existing drainage ditches. Dwaine addressed questions about payment limitations.

A request was made to announce any rule developments to the State Technical Committee members. State Conservationist Roger Hansen agreed to alert the members using e-mail.

Dwaine mentioned the "2008 Farm Bill Renewable Energy Provisions" packet of factsheets provides more detail about each program.

NRCS FY 2009 Program Update

Dwaine Gelnar reviewed the handout "Proposed FY09 EQIP Sign-up." He noted the sign-up will be extended through October 31, 2008, due to the status of the EQIP rule under the new Farm Bill and also due to rising costs of some conservation practices. Staff are currently evaluating costs and recommending changes to cost share rates. For the first time, Missouri NRCS will be using a screening tool to prioritize 2009 EQIP applications.

The "Draft Missouri 2009 EQIP Program Policies" handout was reviewed and attendees were asked to provide feedback regarding any conservation practices need to have their payment rate reviewed due to rising costs. Currently, the State Conservationist's intent is to raise all items that are currently provide financial assistance based on 50% will be raised to 65% and those conservation practices based on 65% cost share will be raised to 75%. The following suggestions were made:

- Comment that fertilizer prices are increasing. Warm season grass (WSG) need less fertilizer, so producers are looking more toward WSG and native legumes.
- Spoil Spreading on drainage ditches – consider increased costs.
- Pasture and Hayland Planting – Clarification that warm Season Grass Renovation also applies to converting a cool season stand to warm season grass.
- Request to offer a small acreage cost to account for those conservation practices that have an implementation cost that is prohibitive to applying it on small acres.

Anyone with additional suggestions may submit them to Roger Hansen, State Conservationist at roger.hansen@mo.usda.gov no later than **Tuesday, September 30, 2008.**

Dwaine Gelnar asked the Committee for input on the state priorities for EQIP. These priorities are included in the scoring of each EQIP application. Currently, Missouri's EQIP priorities are wildlife, animal waste, grazing. National Priorities are water quality, targeted species, soil erosion and grazing land health.

The current ranking sheet is available on the Missouri EQIP website at <http://www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov>
Suggestions:

- Forestland
- Savanna and glade habitat
- Savanna, glade and prairie as part of a grazing system
- Offer opportunity to update pumps
- Add mobile PTO pumps (note: portable equipment has strict limitations in EQIP)

Anyone with additional suggestions may submit them to Roger Hansen, State Conservationist at roger.hansen@mo.usda.gov no later than **Tuesday, September 30, 2008.**

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) – any suggestions for state priorities can be sent to Roger Hansen, State Conservationist at roger.hansen@mo.usda.gov no later than **Tuesday, September 30, 2008.**

(Attached are the national and state priority statement/questions for EQIP and WHIP.)

State Technical Committee Work Groups

Two State Technical Committee Work Groups have been established; one for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and one for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Meetings for these Work Groups will be held after the EQIP and CRP rules are available. If you are interested in being included in either or both of these work groups, please sign the sign-up sheet here at the meeting or notify Roger Hansen at roger.hansen@mo.usda.gov and indicate which group you would like to be included in. In addition, notify Roger Hansen of suggestions for additional State Technical Committee Work Groups.

Bill White, Missouri Department of Conservation, provided information about the Governor's Task Force to deal with feral hogs.

Lisa Allen, Missouri Department of Conservation State Forester, explained that under the forestry title of the Farm Bill, states must have a comprehensive forestry plan in order to continue to receive funds through state and private forestry. This will be a 2 year process and impact how the forestry title is implemented in Missouri in the future.

Bob Ball, NRCS State Resource Conservationist reviewed EQIP Conservation Innovation Grants. There are opportunities to have these grants funded from a portion of the state's EQIP funds, in addition to the funds available nationally for EQIP Conservation Innovation Grants. In the past, Missouri has had grants funded through the national funding pool. Roger Hansen is considering the funding alternatives, reserving up to \$1,000,000 for EQIP Conservation Innovation Grants for 2009.

Next Meeting

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting date has not been set, but will be announced with as much lead time as possible for scheduling purposes.